

Sandy the Trainer Typified Spirit of the Thoroughbred Rather Than Romance of Track.

Fast the paddock and on to the stand. Whip and heel and spur and hand. Back to buckle and knee to knee. Huddle to huddle—make her on. Up on the shoulders—lift her on. The little mare's got him—on, go on.

"FOURTEEN hundred!" "Fifteen!" "Fifteen hundred," says the gentleman; "fifteen hundred for the little daughter of Lord Valor, out of True Blue—a bit sticky in the legs, but no better blood in America. Fifteen, do I hear sixteen? Speak up, boys—she beat Jack Tar a head on the post, carrying 121 pounds! Make it sixteen hundred and you lead her away. Fifteen once—fifteen twice—"

Old Sandy McKee passed a trembling hand across his mouth. His eyes arrested the attention of clear man on the box; fingers fumbled in a vest pocket and produced a heavy gold timepiece. He held it up. "Fifteen and the watch," he quavered. "It's worth two hundred—a double split-second repeater, listen!" He pressed a hidden spring. From his upraised hand, a tiny gold sound—the half hour by quarters—and then in deeper cadence, the hour itself.

The auctioneer smiled indulgently. "Fifteen hundred and the watch for Lady Courageous."

"Seventeen hundred," said a voice. Sandy McKee lowered his hand. His shrunken figure relaxed into a draw nonchalance. His faded blue eyes studied the tan turf at his feet.

There was a sudden movement on the inner fringe of the circle. A man in his early thirties, attired a bit too jauntily for the average horseman, stepped forward and held up two fingers to the auctioneer. The latter nodded.

"Two thousand dollars from the owner of Lady Courageous. Mr. Pennington retains his mare. That ends the sale, boys." He scrambled off the stand, and the crowd melted, leaving Tod Pennington frowning upon Sandy McKee.

"You're an old fool, Sandy," commented Pennington, "an obstinate old fool. Not alone must you come clear across the continent to fight with the best trainer in Kentucky, but you would beggar yourself for a stall-warmer."

Sandy McKee winced. "Not that," he protested, "she'll start again."

"Piffle! Here, boy!" Pennington hailed a passing groom. "Bring out Lady Courageous."

But McKee interfered hastily. "You can't show me anything I don't know. I've slept in her stall every night for two weeks. She has bowed tendons on the two front legs, her feet are contracted and she has a bad frog."

"And the devil's own tempo," added Pennington. "Now, why do you want her?"

"Come with me," said Sandy. They walked along the row of white-washed stalls until they came to a little bay mare arching her neck over the half-door of her compartment.

"Easy," warned Pennington, and kept a respectful distance, but McKee walked quietly to the stall door and stood there with arms at his sides.

FOR a moment the mare withdrew her head with the ears twitching, but McKee made no move, the velvet nose protruded timidly, and as a blind girl might pass deft fingers lightly over her lover's face the delicate tactile hairs and sensory nerves located in the soft pad at the end of the muzzle felt of Sandy McKee's hands and along the arm to the neck and features. Still he made no move. The shapely head lowered to his shoulder and nudged impatiently.

"Memory," explained McKee. He slid one hand along the mare's neck and rubbed the space between the ears and then down over the eyes, pressing his fingers firmly over the skin and always in one direction.

"She remembers how her mother licked her on the head and neck when she was a foal; it's better than patting. Isn't it, old girl? Now, listen!"

He lowered his head over cupped hands. As if from afar came the faint strains of the bugle call to the post.

Lady Courageous jerked her head in the air, small ears quivering. Her bandaged legs trembled. In the luminous eyes the high lights danced as she stared with distended nostrils in the direction of the track.

"Imagination," whispered Sandy McKee. She sees herself facing the wobbling right now. Give you 111 of red stockings—I shouldn't have teased you."

He came slowly back to Pennington. "Why does a man want his own child?" he asked simply. "When Lady Courageous was foaled, Col. Pennington says to me, 'Sandy, I'll let you name her and I want you to watch over her like she was your own flesh and blood. The grandest little filly in the world, Sandy—all of Lord Valor's courage and stamina and all of her mother's speed and gentleness. Some day, Sandy, she'll win the Pennington Handicap just as her sire did.' So I named her Lady Courageous and used to lay awake nights worrying about her. And then—"

Sandy McKee's eyes wandered over the empty grandstand in the distance—then the Colonel died, and you left me at the farm and hired Jake Mantor, who rushed her out as a two-year-old, and—"

He did not finish. Under the mask of cynical indifference that contrasted oddly with Tod Pennington's nut-brown eyes and boyish features, the warm blood coursed to the surface.

"I thought it was something like that when you held up the watch," he commented. "My father's, wasn't it?"

McKee nodded. "He gave it to me when Lord Valor hung up the mile and a quarter mark at Latonia."

"And the little mare—what were you going to do with her?"

Sandy McKee turned wide eyes on his former employer. "Why, take her back to California and build her up again."

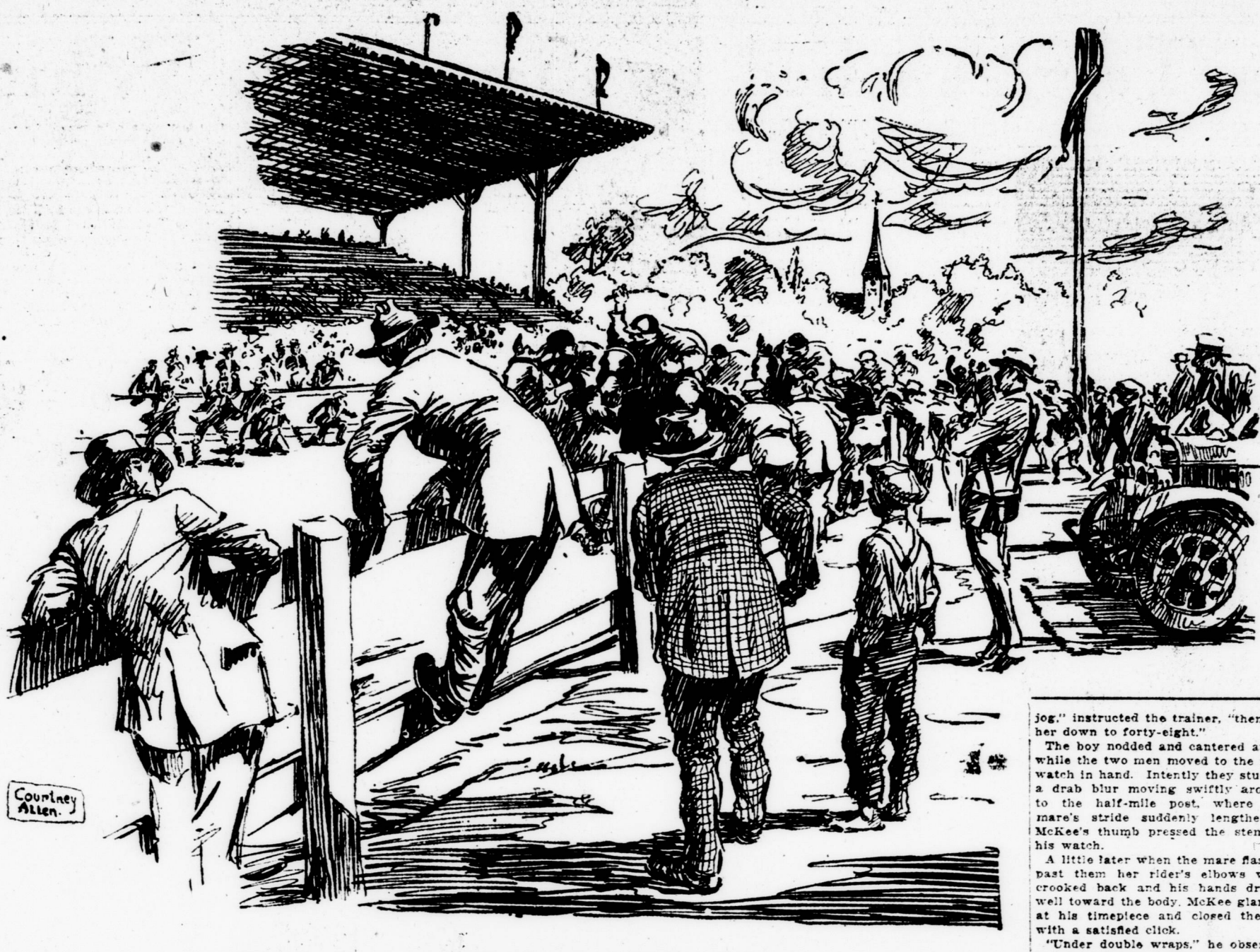
"And then?"

Sandy shrugged. "I don't know," he muttered, but the light in his pale eyes betrayed him.

"Dash it!" exclaimed Pennington, "dash it, if I don't think you'd bring

LIL' OL' RED STOCKINGS

BY GERALD BEAUMONT.



DOWN THEY CAME, ST. IVAN ON THE RAIL, LADY COURAGEOUS AT HIS RIGHT!

her back in the old colors and start her in the Pennington handicap."

Sandy McKee's lip twitched an affirmative. Somehow, standing there in his faded clothes, he seemed to typify not so much the romance and vicissitudes of the racetrack as the unflinching and faithful spirit of the thoroughbred.

Tod Pennington tore a leaf from a pocket memorandum book and penciled a brief inscription. He handed the paper to Sandy McKee.

It was a bill of sale, acknowledging for value received the transfer of Lady Courageous. With something suggestive of old Col. Pennington's charm of manner, he hushed the other's stammering.

"My thanks to you, Sandy. Take the little mare west and be good to her. The old color and green forever, eh, Sandy? I didn't think there was that much sentiment left in the world. You Scotch are a wonderful people. Good luck to you!"

That night Sandy McKee and all that was left of the famous Pennington string departed in a box car for California. Not until long afterward did McKee learn that the sale he had attended that day had been to pay off the family debt, and that he had left Tod Pennington packing just \$2,000 of having a cent to his illustrious name.

THE little town of Pleasanton drowns in the sunlight forty-one miles east of San Francisco. It is a pearl strung on a slender stream that winds over the level floor of the Livermore valley. From an eminence to the southwest the Hacienda del Pozo de Verona looks down upon a race track.

Hither in the winter months come shrewd trainers and gallant horses seeking the seclusion of the quiet hills and soft Acadian air. And into this setting one late October afternoon plodded a little old man leading a broken-down bay mare. Half way along the shaded lane that stretches to the very stall where old Sandy McKee lived, he stopped and stretched to the long lines of cool stalls, the man paused to look back solicitously.

The mare shifted her weight from one bandaged foreleg to the other and with upraised head stared at her surroundings.

"We're almost there," encouraged the man. "Just a little ways more. Didn't know where old Sandy was taking you, did you? See anything familiar about those barns right ahead?"

Lady Courageous whinnied and limped forward.

"Uh-huh," corroborated McKee. "Same old home; going right back to the very stall where you was born, too! Ain't changed a bit. Lady—not too! Still got your mammy's and your daddy's pictures on the wall, and it's cool and dark and quiet. That ain't all, either, Lady; tomorrow old Doc Kelly looks you over and we start to patch them legs."

Chuckling contentedly, he led the way and stopped triumphantly before the open half-door of a box stall at the extreme end.

"Go on in, Lady—here's where we show those wise birds in Kentucky what a cripple can do."

The mare entered obediently, and he bustled himself removing her hood and traveling wraps, and scurrying around after water and feed.

OLD DOC KELLY was bald and fat. He came waddling up the following day for the promised inspection.

Through half-closed eyes he studied the little mare as she limped from her stall, appraising the exquisitely molded head and long neck, the clearcut throat, the sharp withers and the deep chest that afforded unusual room for heart and lungs.

"Hm," he acknowledged, "she's got

the Lord Valor strain all right, his big heart and her mother's small bones. That's the trouble; she'd carry a house and drop in her tracks before she'd quit."

His fingers probed the injured tendons and the swollen ankles. One after another he raised the hump and studied them. Finally he straightened up and spat reflectively.

"Breed her," he advised. "She's through!"

Sandy McKee's lower jaw dropped and then set stubbornly with a click. "I say she runs again!"

"All right," rumbled the other. "On the day she does I lay you a thousand to one, and he waddled indignantly away.

Not by the slightest expression of his face or voice did Sandy McKee betray to Lady Courageous the fear that was in his heart. He knew too much about horses for that.

"Old Doc Kelly's got a funny way about him," he confided to the mare that night; "but he means all right. Next week he'll be hanging over the door just waiting for a chance to help out; you see if he don't!"

The next day he set about cutting down the contracted hoofs and rectifying the horny pad in the sole of the right forefoot. "No more shoes for a while, old girl," he chirruped; "going to let you stand barefoot till you spread them hoofs. Just going to make you a mud-pack for that bad frog—funniest little old boot you ever saw—just you wait and see!"

Lady Courageous nickered and bent warm nostrils to his coat pocket. He produced the customary lump of sugar and stroked her neck and flanks with long, firm pressure of his wrinkled hands.

In the evening he returned bearing a leather arrangement half full of soft blue mud. The mare bent an inquisitive muzzle over the strange object, and then wrinkled her nose and upper lip.

"Now, now," he scolded. "I'm not going to ask you to eat it. Here, give me the foot!" The hoof yielded to his touch and over it he fitted the improvised boot.

"There," he grunted, "that's the best little old mud in the country—right out of the well of Verona. Mind you, don't knock it loose!"

That night Lady Courageous leaned one shoulder against the side of the stall and eased herself to the straw bed, holding her right foreleg gingerly from the floor. McKee grinned appreciatively.

For several days he concentrated on the task of reducing the swelling over the tendons, applying cool, dry bandages the last thing at night and wet cloths for the day treatment.

He looked up one day to find the light from the doorway blocked by the figure of old Doc Kelly.

"We don't you use the firing iron!" demanded the veterinarian. "Cross-fire both legs and then blister them. Bring her down to my place."

Go on away," bristled McKee; "get out of my sight."

"A thousand to one, you old fool!" Doc Kelly yelled. "I thought, you haven't even got a selling plaster. I'd operate on your head if it wasn't made of iron!" He caromed away, snorting the vengeance of heaven on all Scotchmen.

Nevertheless, old Doc Kelly's suggestion, coincided exactly with an impression that had been gathering strength in McKee's own mind.

"Lady," he whispered to the mare, "I'm afraid we're going to have to do something cruel to you, but it ain't half so cruel, after all, as keeping you from the barrier when you've been raised for nothing else. Understand, old girl? We're going to have to hurt you; going to burn the skin so that it folds right close to the bone and holds those tendons in place. Then we'll put on your 111 of red stockings, and by and by—"

you'll begin running nice and easy, and then faster and faster—and first thing you know, we'll go back to Latonia."

Lady Courageous moved restlessly. Early in the morning he led her to the veterinarian's quarters. "Here she is," he capitulated, "but if you make a botch of the job I'll kill you."

Doc Kelly made no botch. His father and his father's father had been students of horseflesh. For all of them it was both a gift and a passion. Hours afterward, when it was all over and Sandy McKee was quivering like a girl who has seen her mother's ghost, the stout man turned a perspiring face on his life-long friend.

"I'm still laying a thousand to one," he reminded, "but I hope I lose it. She's the gamest little mare that ever drew breath."

"Don't I know it!" flamed McKee.

THE winter passed and a California spring painted golden poppies on the emerald hills. Sandy McKee clung

to the praise her extravagantly after every effort. In the evenings, by the light of a coal oil lamp, he studied the racing forms.

August came. Lady Courageous was five years old, silken coated, trim of limb and in her prime, with a year's rest behind her—a year spent in an equine paradise.

Once again her owner sought out old Doc Kelly and laid a heavy gold watch on the latter's dusty desk.

"The fall meeting at Latonia opens in a couple of weeks," he said. "She and 111 of red stockings need a couple of hundred. Can you spare it?"

The veterinarian picked up the watch and examined it carefully. Then he laid it down, his eyes twinkling.

"Am I a pawnbroker?" he demanded. "Not a cent do I lend you or any other man, but," he added, reaching for a check book, "I pay my bets—promptly!"

McKee took the check and noted that it was for \$1,001.

"Not a word, you old fool," threatened Doc Kelly. "Not one word—only wire me when she starts; there is a little more where that came from and it is a wise man who knows when to hedge."

The trainer walked out the door and back to Lady Courageous. He made a trumpet of his hands and sounded softly the call to post. The mare quivered to attention.

"Traveling clothes, Lady," he exulted, "going back to old Latonia—going to start this very night!"

THE fall meeting had been on for two weeks when McKee, from Latonia, sent a telegram to the New York office of Tod Pennington. It read:

"Mile in forty-four on soft track. Come at once. SANDY."

Pennington showed up three days later.

"Not Lady Courageous. You don't mean—"

McKee beamed. "Who else? Tomorrow morning at 5 o'clock I'll let her step for you!"

In the cool, sharp air of the early morning Pennington met McKee at the stable entrance to the track just as Lady Courageous appeared with a stable boy on her back. The track had dried out.

"Half way around in a two-minute jog," instructed the trainer, "then let her down to forty-eight."

The boy nodded and cantered away while the two men moved to the rail, watch in hand. Intently they studied a drab blur moving swiftly around to the half-mile post, where the mare's stride suddenly lengthened. McKee's thumb pressed the stem of his watch.

A little later when the mare flashed past them her rider's elbows were crooked back and his hands drawn well toward the body. McKee glanced at his timepiece and closed the lid with a satisfied click.

"Under double wraps," he observed quietly. "And a hundred-and-twenty five-pound boy."

Pennington's eyes glittered. "Sandy, it's a miracle! Two or three races and she'll be in form."

McKee frowned. "She's ready now, and she runs but one race."

"The Pennington handicap?" The trainer nodded. "I've entered her already."

"Sandy, you're overplaying your hand. There are three horses here that can beat the mare at her best and they'll all start."

"Yes," McKee agreed. "They'll start and a lot of others, but it will be a two-horse race."

"One horse," corrected Pennington. "St. Ivan—the greatest stretch runner in America, a mile and a quarter in 2:02 1-5 seconds. Who can beat him?"

Sandy McKee's pale eyes warmed to fanatical fervor. "My 111 of red stockings," he exclaimed, fiercely, "that's who'll beat him! That's who'll win the Pennington handicap. They've never beaten the Pennington colors in that race, and they never will. The handicap's ours!"

"She'll be 20 to 1," mused Pennington. "Better than that," McKee told him; "she's down for 121 pounds, the old weight, and she'll run in bandages. Lord Valor's heart and True Blue's speed; 40 to 1, and a two-horse race!"

"Ah!" breathed Pennington. "I never thought I'd be back at the old game. Ten thousand to the winner, and 40 to 1!"

"The old place is for sale," McKee interjected. "It wouldn't take much to fit it up as a stock farm. There's Lady Courageous."

"You old fox," laughed Tod Pennington. "You'd like to see me keep up the family tradition, wouldn't you? Darned if you haven't got me going, too! Saturday? You're on! The wheel of fortune, eh, Sandy? Well, we'll give it one more spin!"

The Friday evening sporting extras and the overnight entry sheets were singularly alike in their tips on the Pennington handicap. St. Ivan was the unanimous selection, despite his top weight of 128 pounds. Friar John was given the second choice, and the Harbridge entry, third.

Concerning Lady Courageous the comment was also uniform.

"Been working fast, but first time out in a year. Legs doubtful."

Late that night a watchman patrolling the darkened stables stopped to listen to a voice that sounded a melancholy chant from a distant stall:

Wrap me up in my old stable jacket. Put a slab at my head and my toe. And get you a penknife and scratch there: Here lies a poor devil below.

THE morning ushered in gray clouds soughing over a track that was lightening fast. Tod Pennington showed up early in the afternoon with four trusted agents. He sought out Sandy McKee.

"I'm healed, Sandy; you and I are fifty-fifty if the little mare comes home in front."

The trainer shook his head. "The purse is enough for me; that and the Lady. You'll need everything you can make to get the farm back and rebuild the stable."

"Fifty-fifty," insisted Tod Pennington; "we're partners no matter what happens!"

"Hio, Tod, how you playin' 'em?" he held up a roll of bills.

"Handed on the Lady to win."

"Four thousand to a hundred, Lady Courageous," droned "Big Jake."

The man at his elbow rubbed the slate clear and the bookmaker leveled his glasses at the other price lists. One after another of the pencillers were sponging off the odds on Lady Courageous. Schaefer lowered his glasses and called to Pennington:

"Who's this Sandy McKee?" "My father's old trainer," Tod replied.

The bookmaker's eyes narrowed. Over at his left elbow was still offering 40 to 1. He beckoned a messenger and thrust out a handful of currency. "Place and show on Lady Courageous," he whispered, "over at Connelly's—quick!"

The messenger and Pennington cleared their way through the crowd. Billy Connelly saw them coming and guessed their purpose. He shook his head and wheeled around to the board. Opposite the name of Sandy McKee's mare appeared the figures "15-6-2."

Pennington held up a hundred-dollar bill. "Lady Courageous on the nose."

"Fifteen hundred to a hundred," grunted the bookmaker and rubbed his slate again. Pennington turned. In the swirling mass of humanity struggling at the base of the New Orleans platform he recognized two of his agents.

The book held out against the onslaught a minute longer and then declined all further bets on the McKee entry. Meanwhile, hundreds of men had had time to ask one another what it was all about; to look up Lady Courageous' last performance; to note that she was running under the old Pennington colors, and to recall the turf tradition regarding a Pennington entry in the Pennington handicap.

TOD PENNINGTON hurried to the paddock. He was in time to hear Sandy McKee give his last instructions to little Travers, a sixteen-year-old boy, whom the trainer had picked out after one glance at the intelligent gray eyes and another at the long slender legs.

"Remember," McKee said, "no whip nor spurs; when the time comes, talk to her. Keep close to St. Ivan as you can without getting pocketed; he's all you have to beat."

The boy nodded and McKee gave him a leg up. Lady Courageous was trembling in every delicate limb, her eyes twin pools of liquid flame. She reared up, pawing with bandaged forelegs, and McKee clung to the bridle.

"Easy, you 111 of red stockings," he soothed. "I know what you're waiting for; Sandy knows—there!"

"All right," cried some one. McKee released his hold and swept a final caress over the mare's saturated coat. One after another the starters in the Pennington handicap filed out of the paddock.

A bugle sounded. "Come on," Pennington urged. "I've got a good place saved for you on the rail."

The fields of thoroughbreds paraded past the grandstand and then turned back toward the barrier. St. Ivan leading the way.

One glance at the majestic son of Petersboro, and another at Lady Courageous, strangely docile, cantering past on bandaged legs, and the crowd surged back into the ring.

Once more the cry of "St. Ivan to win!" echoed through the inclosure. Odds of 1 to 4 were being written when the shout: "They're off!" coupled with the shrill clamor of an electric gong, sent the human tide sweeping again toward rail and grandstand.

At the first turn the field shifted, stringing out into a moving blur of color. McKee's eyes faltered him.

"The Lady," he questioned, "where is she?"

Pennington stared through puckered eyes. "I can't make her out. Sixth, I think—no, that's Starlight, almost the same colors. St. Ivan is seventh. Ah, there he goes!"

A jubilant roar sounded from the packed grandstand. The race was nearing the half-mile post and St. Ivan was moving up on the outside. One after another he passed until he took command with two lengths of daylight between him and the tiring Southern Belle. In his admiration for the gallant leader, Pennington almost forgot his own interest in the race and the little old man standing at his shoulder.

He was recalled to his surroundings by McKee's hoarse voice: "The Lady, where is she?"

Again Pennington shook his head. He turned to a man at his side who was watching the race through field glasses.

"An you make out Lady Courageous?"

"No," the man replied. "I plunged on her, too." He looked again at the blur of color nearing the far turn.

"My soul!" he exclaimed, "there are only seven horses out there and there were eight starters. She must have broken down!"

A strangled cry came from Sandy McKee. Three pairs of eyes swept the track that lay back of the runners. It was empty.

The man with the glasses leveled them again. Then he took off his hat, flung it down and jumped on it.

His wild yell was swallowed in a roar of wonder that swelled from the blackened grandstand. For the mighty son of Petersboro, swinging around into the home-stretch, disclosed for the first time that he was not alone. Running at his shoulder and on the outside where she had been from the first quarter a little bay mare was measuring St. Ivan stride for stride!

THEY made the turn, the boy on St. Ivan hugging the fence, his left foot held clear of the top rail. The mare swung a trifle wide and then closed again resolutely.

Sandy McKee leaned far over the railing. His eyes caught that for which he was waiting—the red of red bandage in the sunlight.

"There she comes!" he whooped. "There's my 111 of red stockings; there she comes!"

The mare's quick recovery of the lost ground told its story to the boy on the black horse. He shot one panicky glance at Lady Courageous, and then went to the bat. That instant of quick fear, communicating itself to the sensitive son of Petersboro, put the most cruel of all handicaps on a gallant horse. He responded desperately as his rider's whip rose and fell.

"Now," breathed Sandy McKee, "talk to her!"

As if in answer to the trainer's prayer, little Travers swung forward on the shoulders of Lady Courageous. His hands moved out on the reins to within a few inches of the bit. With face bowed to the mare's neck, his small arms gave with the bob of her head.

Don't they come, St. Ivan on the rail; Lady Courageous at his right! "Pennington! The Pennington finish!"

The cry awoke memories of turf tradition. For the bay mare, true to her colors and her ancestry, disdaining the rail and asking only for room, plenty of room—as coming down the track just as her sire and her mother had done in the days of their glory.

St. Ivan gave to his rider all that was in him, but Lady Courageous was racing for Sandy McKee! By sheer breaking inches she nosed ahead and the wire saw Lady Courageous by a neck and going away!

Tod Pennington clung to the railing, eyes mechanically set on an iron framework across the track into which white numbers were dropping. First a "2," then a "0," then another "2." He waited breathless, but there were no more numbers. A great cry rose from the stands.

"Sandy!" stammered Pennington. "Sandy, a track record! A cripple and a track record!"

But Sandy McKee was no longer at his side. A little old man was crouching in the winner's circle in front of the judges' stand, crouching there with anxious eyes fastened upon a bay mare cantering back to him on bandaged legs that still moved clean and strong.

Little Travers held up his hand, caught the judges' smiling nod, and slid from his mount. The stand rocked, and the big players, the piano-haired men clapped Sandy McKee on the back and shouted his praises. But he saw only a little bay mare nudging forward to be petted; he heard only the shrill whinner of ecstasy that was blown through the blood-red nostrils of Lady Courageous.

(Copyright, 1923.)

"American Elephants."

THE commerce